Feminism & the Political Body
The Cave

An adaptation of Plato’s Allegory in Clay
The allegory of the cave illustrates how according to Plato, what we see is only a reflection of the archetypical. The signifier is then placed into a dichotomy with the signified.
It is by looking at the logocentric relationship that has been established between the concept of Man vs Woman that is easy to understand the clear hierarchical bias that is presented towards women.

The dual relationship in which is presented formulates the primacy of one over the other and establishes the necessary condition of women as “other”.

One of the main issue with establishing arguments on the basis of dichotomies is that it also further negates the existence of “all others”
Heidegger insists that Western philosophy has consistently privileged that which is, or that which appears, and has forgotten to pay any attention to the condition for that appearance. In other words, presence itself is privileged, rather than that which allows presence to be possible at all.

Certain aspects of culture, politics and economics, particularly capitalism have marketed their products and services by defining markets based on dichotomies.

Democrats
Natural
Liberals
Human
Straight

Republicans
Artificial
Conservative
Cyborg
Gay

The Whore
The Virgin

Framing ideologies and markets in this manner negates the existence of all others.
The other Ideologies

“The enterprise of returning ‘strategically’, ‘ideally’, to an origin or to a priority thought to be simple, intact, normal, pure, standard, self-identical, in order then to think in terms of derivation, complication, deterioration, accident, etc. All metaphysicians, from Plato to Rousseau, Descartes to Husserl, have proceeded in this way, conceiving good to be before evil, the positive before the negative, the pure before the impure, the simple before the complex, the essential before the accidental, the imitated before the imitation, etc. And this is not just one metaphysical gesture among others, it is the metaphysical exigency, that which has been the most constant, most profound and most potent”

Jaques Derrida

“The connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary.”
--Ferdinand de Saussure
What is the impact of this repressed “others”?

**Western Ideology: None**

If we accept the notion that what we know of Architecture (the writing or signifier) exists independently of the concept (Archetype, signified), the fact that we have projected a male body is only one of many misrepresentation and as such it can not affect what architecture is (signifier) and can be?
Modern Ideology:

If the logocentric and anthropomorphic discourse has been shaping architecture for so long therefore it has affected what our preconceptions of what architecture is (the signified).

In this case all the repressed, the “others” must start to inform the discourse of architecture.

Will children inform architectural discourse? Will their relationship to body (which differs from an adult) be accounted for?
Post-Modern: The idea of a dichotomy between male and female bodies no longer fit the discourse, architecture and the city are no longer anthropomorphic. The “others” appear as multiple sexual, gender, social and economical identities that are embraced as part the idea of plurality in architecture.
Post-Modernism however is not a cohesive ideology, other questions on body arise in relation to the emergence of the repressed, “other” perceptions of relationships to the world need to be analyzed from the perspective of the asexual, the cyborg, the virtual and the socially excluded. All of this discourses need to be heard and understood as their body and existence is finally acknowledged.
Feminism in Architecture
So the question arises as to what this “others” are. The third way of Feminism addresses this “other” negated existences as it is not as concerned with just women as it is with the equality among all genders, sexes, sexual orientations and race.
endpoints

the other  the cyborg
“dislocating the hierarchy of interior and exterior (space) that pre-empts vision”

--Peter Eisenman

*Visions Unfolding*

Eisenman “shattering vision”
superficial mitigation of dominance through apertures in the previously hard boundaries between identities

male dominance → apertures in boundaries
"Young women, I would say, and please listen, for the peroration is beginning, you are, in my opinion, disgracefully ignorant. You have never made a discovery of any sort of importance."

--Virginia Woolf

_A Room of One's Own_
“the cage door had been opened but the canary had refused to fly out. The conclusion was that the cage door ought never to have been opened, because canaries are made for captivity; the suggestion of an alternative had only confused and saddened them”

--Germaine Greer

*The Female Eunuch*
second wave radical

inversion of dominance through strong identification within gender and strong opposition without

male dominance  female dominance
“Women have very little idea of how much men hate them”
--Germaine Greer
*The Female Eunuch*
essentialism

sexuality is essential

identity

convergence, definition

universal system (naturalism)

identity contrast

identity natural system
the natural, universal system of essentialism creates multiple “others” undescribed by this system. Collectively, the pressures of these others are the forces of collapse of second wave feminism.
existentialism

“God is dead”
--Jean-Paul Sartre
Situations I

humanist, local system; each entity chooses meaning
structuralism

language is a third order which relies on binary opposition to structure society. There is an essence to sexuality, however it is not natural but created, and as such is not universal and not concrete.

The structure of society is created by society and thus unfixed.
queer theory

Homosexuality
--Michel Foucault
*The History of Sexuality*

“Lesbians are not women”
--Monique Wittig
*The Myth of Woman*
third wave
post-structuralism

when binary oppositions can be identified as dominant or hierarchical, they can begin to dissolve

male dominance       agender
"Man is dead"
--Michel Foucault

*The Order of Things*
cyborg
feminism, the cyborg, and architecture
“When Man™ is on the Menu”

cyborg
preconceptions

“Like Oncomouse™, both of the rabbits in the Logic General as are cyborgs - compounds of the organic, tecnical, mythical, textual, and politcal -”

- Donna Haraway
- When Man™ is on the Menu

cyborgs in media
feminism?
A Cyborg Manifesto:
Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late 20th Century

“At the center of my ironic faith, my blasphemy, is the image of the cyborg.”

- Donna Haraway
- Cyborg Manifesto

Donna Haraway
cyborg
blurred boundaries

“The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labor, or other seductions to organicwholeness”

- Donna Haraway
- Cyborg Manifesto
fractured feminism
affinity
wexner center
wexner center

Peter Eisenman: Wexner Center - Columbus Ohio
cyborg semiotics

Representation ................................................................. Simulation
Organism ................................................................. biotic component
Physiology ............................................................... communication engineering
Reproduction ............................................................. Replication
Organic sex role specialization ..................................... Optimal genetic strategies
Public / private .......................................................... Citizenship
Nature / Nurture .......................................................... Fields of Difference
Sex ................................................................. Genetic Engineering
Labour ................................................................. Robotics
Mind ................................................................. Artificial Intelligence
network
Communications sciences and modern biologies are constructed by a common move—the translation of the world into a problem of coding, a search for a common language in which all resistance to instrumental control disappears and all heterogeneity can be submitted to disassembly, reassembly, investment, and exchange.

- Donna Haraway
- Cyborg Manifesto
swarm theory

Swarm - Joring Voigt
swarm theory

Swarm - Peter Macapia
questions

1. Although they may be considered to be ‘genderless’ in comparison to the human body, they do retain the ability to reproduce or replicate. Can we consider all cyborgs to be females?

2. At what point does the symbiotic relationship between the human body and the machine become a cyborg? I ask this because extension of the human body via a stick or a cane, an airplane, and the internet could be thought of as cyborg.

3. Is the cyborg construct successful in disconnecting its self from western thought, or is it simply an icon of post-modernism, subject to the domination of man?
Women in Architecture

Works Cited


No Woman to date has been awarded one of North America’s highest architectural honors: the AIA Gold Medal (1907-2010). The Pritzker Prize (1979-2010) has only been awarded to a woman once (Zaha Hadid 2004). This year it was awarded to a joint partnership Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa.

In Canada the RAIC Gold Medal (1976-2010) lists among it’s recipients (website) only one woman (1981 - Jane Jacobs) and the Order of Canada award for architecture (1967-2010) also only lists one woman, Patricia Patkau (2004).
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